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Wednesday, January 24, 2018 metro.us | t: MetroPhilly | f: MetroPhilly

90TH OSCAR NOMS ANNOUNCED

Franco snubbed, 'Shape of Water' leads, #OscarsSoWhite NO MORE! 12-13

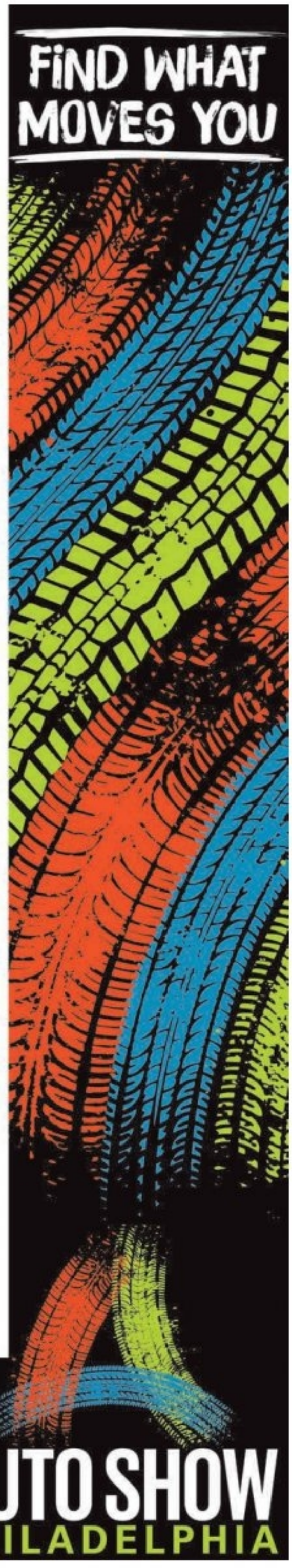
Eat more home-cooked meals, with less actual cooking on your part. 16

Cooperstown is slated to have a few new inhabitants. 9

GOOD OR *EVIL*?

There are just as many reasons to hate Tom Brady as there are to love him. 18-19

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/GETTY IMAGES



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GREGORY WAKEMAN, FEATURES REPORTER

The nominations for the 90th Academy Awards were announced bright and early Tuesday morning, and it was the nautical love story between a mute and a sea creature that reigned victorious. Guillermo del Toro's "The Shape Of Water" landed 13 nominations, four more than the next closest contender — critic favorite "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri," which came in with nine. But there were a glut of surprises and delights, all of which you can read about on pages 12 and 13.

TWO KILLED IN KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTING

A 15-year-old boy opened fire with a handgun in his high school in western Kentucky on Tuesday, killing two fellow students and wounding a dozen other youths before being arrested, the state's governor and police said. The shooting began shortly before 8 a.m. local time at Marshall County High School in Benton, a small town about 130 miles northwest of Nashville, Tennessee, according to Kentucky State Police and Gov. Matt Bevin. Authorities offered no information on the motive behind the shooting. There was no immediate indication how well the youth, who officials said faces multiple charges of murder and attempted murder, knew the victims. "There's no good answer for it," Bevin told reporters at an afternoon news conference. Five of the wounded students were taken to the Vanderbilt University Medical Center's trauma center.

DEMOCRATS WITHDRAW WALL FUNDING OFFER

2 Democrats said on Tuesday they had withdrawn an offer to fund President Donald Trump's border wall, as tough negotiations over the future of young illegal immigrants known as Dreamers resumed in the Senate. Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said he pulled the offer because of what he said was Trump's failure to follow through on the outlines of an agreement the two men discussed last Friday. "So we're going to have to start on a new basis and the wall offer is off the table," Schumer said. During the 2016 election campaign, Republican Trump said Mexico would pay the cost of building a wall along the southwestern border of the United States to keep out illegal immigrants. Mexico has rejected the idea. As a result, Trump has asked Congress for taxpayer funds for the wall. Government estimates are that it could cost over $21 billion.

PARIS FASHION WEEK 2018

3 A model walks the runway during the Giambattista Valli Spring Summer 2018 show as part of Paris Fashion Week on Tuesday in Paris, France.

GETTY IMAGES

APPLE HOMEPOD TAKES ON GOOGLE, AMAZON

4 After missing the critical holiday shopping season, Apple Inc. has jumped into the voice speaker wars with the HomePod smart speaker, a device that will use its Siri voice assistant and compete against offerings from Amazon.com Inc. and Alphabet Inc.'s Google. Apple said on Tuesday it will start taking online orders for its HomePod smart speaker on Friday in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia, just over a month later than initially planned. The $349 voice-controlled speaker, introduced in June and originally scheduled for a December release, can make music suggestions and adjust home temperatures. The speaker also will be able to send messages and play news updates. Apple said in a release. Apple also is counting on HomePod to boost subscriptions to Apple Music and block the rise of rival Spotify.

AG SESSIONS QUESTIONED IN RUSSIA PROBE

5 Attorney General Jeff Sessions was questioned last week by the special counsel's office investigating potential collusion between Russia and President Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, the Justice Department said on Tuesday. The interview marked the first time that special counsel Robert Mueller's office is known to have interviewed a member of Trump's cabinet, and is another milestone in an investigation that has hung over Trump's year-old presidency. Mueller's office also interviewed former Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James Comey shortly after Trump fired Comey in May 2017, a person familiar with the matter said. Comey's firing led to Mueller's appointment by the Justice Department's No. 2 official, Rod Rosenstein, to take over the FBI's Russia investigation.

Philly wants 'safe injection sites' to combat opioid overdose epidemic

SAM NEWHOUSE
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City and law enforcement support controversial measure to fight deluge of opioid deaths.

Ten months ago, it probably seemed like a pipe dream when a petition was started online to open safe injection sites in Philly.

But with fatal overdoses rising during that time, on Tuesday, city leaders threw their support behind the idea of opening a safe or supervised site for heroin users to use their drugs under supervision by medical staff to prevent overdoses.

"We cannot just watch as our children, our parents, our brothers and our sisters die of drug overdoses," Philadelphia Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Farley said in a statement. "We have to use every proven tool we can to save their lives until they recover from the grip of addiction."

Mayor Jim Kenney's task force on fighting opioid addiction announced in its new recommendations released Tuesday that the city will encourage private contractors to fund and open one or more such sites.

When exactly such a center will open remains clear. They are designed to prevent deaths from overdoses and offer drug users medical evaluations and addiction services.

Philly is the second city in the nation to throw support behind the idea, after Seattle, Washington, but no such site has yet been opened in the country. One was opened in Vancouver, Canada, in 2003 and the city has reported a drop in fatal overdoses with little-to-no increase in crime.

Meanwhile, a scientific review undertaken by Philly's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services (DBHIDS) found that such a center could bring down the number of overdoses, reduce the spread of diseases associated with intravenous drug use and lead more drug users into social programs to help fight their addiction.

Philly saw 900 overdose deaths in 2016 and 1,200 in 2017 (some 80 percent of which were from opioids).

In comparison, "In the worst year of the AIDS epidemic, 935 people died in Philadelphia," said city Managing Director Mike DiBerardinis.

"These drugs destroy lives of tens of thousands of families," he said. "They drive much of the city's violence and have stressed out our EMS system to the brink."

The safe injection site proposal, despite serious questions, has been winning over supporters.

"I started completely, totally, adamantly against this. Everything about me in law enforcement was against this," said Philly Police Commissioner Richard Ross at a news conference about the report, saying the positive outcomes reported out of Vancouver have swayed his opinion. "I went from being adamantly against it to having an open mind."

"I have a lot of questions, for example, 'What would our role be?' 'What does that look like?' 'What am I asking our police officers to do?'" Ross said. "But it's a lot of lives being lost. We certainly cannot just throw our hands up and say, 'Well, that's not my problem.'"

Learn more at phila.gov/opioids.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The task force also recommended:
- Responding faster to "outbreaks" of overdoses
- Connecting homeless drug users with placement
- Distributing more naloxone (aka Narcan) along with buprenorphine (used like Methadone for drug treatment)
- More education
- A public awareness campaign (donttaketherisk.org)

Safe injection sites are designed to prevent overdoses. GETTY IMAGES

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Philadelphia schools Superintendent William Hite at a public meeting. METRO FILE PHOTO

Want to be part of 'local control' of Philly schools?

SAM NEWHOUSE
sam.newhouse@metro.us

Philadelphia is calling on its citizens to help prove its schools can keep up their winning streak.

If you have a hankering to work on questions of educational policy in Philadelphia, the deadline to apply to Philadelphia's soon-to-established Board of Education is fast approaching.

The city is accepting applications through Jan. 31 to join the new Board to replace the long-despised state-controlled School Reform Commission (SRC), which in November voted to dissolve itself to be replaced by a locally-controlled, Philly Board of Education under the office of the mayor.

After 17 years of state control, the SRC voted to eradicate itself in consideration of the School District's reaching several milestones in recent years: multiple years of balanced budgets, a new contract with the teachers' unions, and improvements in student test scores and the high school graduation rate, according to city officials.

Now, Philly is calling on its citizens to help prove its schools can keep up the winning streak without being babysat by the commonwealth.

"Our goal is to recommend a diverse slate of skilled and committed nominees to the mayor next month," Wendell Pritchett, chair of the Nominating Panel, said in a statement. "We encourage all qualified candidates who are ready to serve our students and shape our city's future to apply."

Serving on the new board to supervise the school district and charter schools will be no cakewalk. Board members get no pay and a hefty load of responsibility.

"The Board of Education will govern over all public schools, district-managed schools, and charter schools in Philadelphia," the city said. "As part of the Board of Education, each member will be expected to work collectively to oversee all major policy, budgetary, and financial decisions for the school district. This is an unpaid position, which demands many hours of dedicated service each month, both at in-person meetings and in preparation for meetings."

Some 27 board members will be recommended to the mayor by Feb. 28, with final appointments announced in March and three months of orientation before the board officially goes into effect.

The Board of Education is currently scheduled to assume governance over city schools on July 1.

Find the Board of Ed application and more information online at phila.gov/education.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Three more information sessions are scheduled for the public to learn about the Board of Education:

Tuesday, at 6 p.m. at the Philadelphia Home and School Association, 440 North Broad St. Wednesday, Jan. 24, at 5:30 p.m. at the Community College of Philadelphia, 18th and Callowhill, C2-28. Tuesday, Jan. 30, at 6 p.m. at Southwest CDC, 6328 Paschall Ave.

"Our goal is to recommend a diverse slate of skilled and committed nominees to the mayor next month."

Wendell Pritchett

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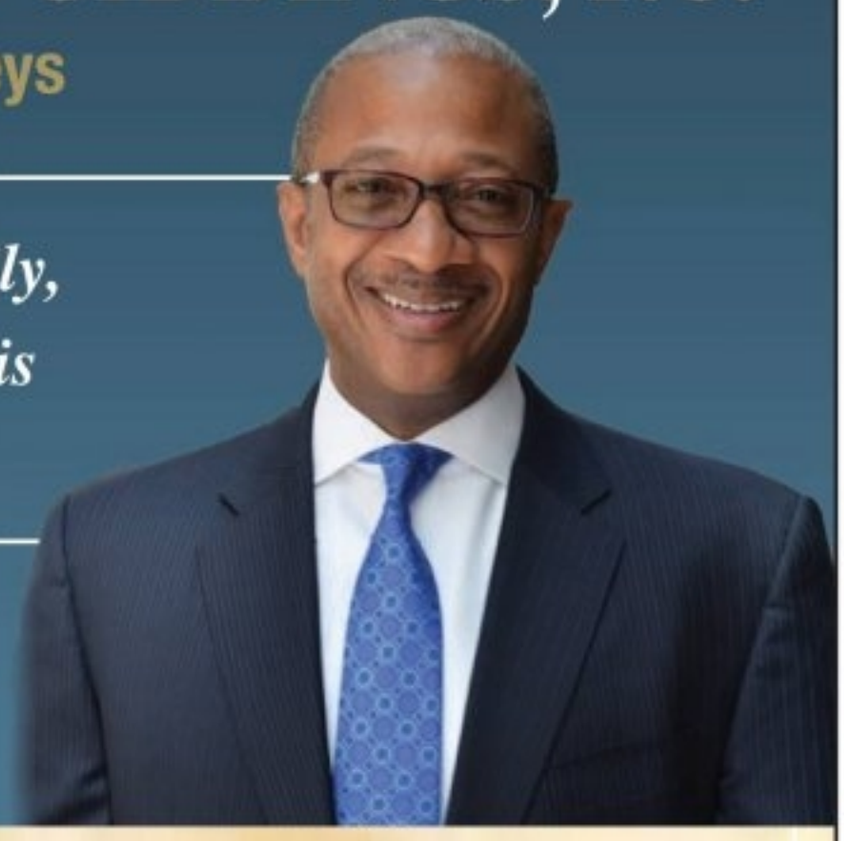

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Harsher punishments for female mutilation proposed in Harrisburg

SAM NEWHOUSE
sam.newhouse@metro.us

State representative reintroduces bill for harsher laws against female circumcision.

A Democratic state representative on Monday called for support for a bill to officially outlaw female circumcision in Pennsylvania and to make such acts, called "female genital mutilation," a felony.

"Women who are immigrants are at continued risk of the practice as these cultural beliefs follow them to the United States. ... We cannot stop this unless my legislation is passed into law," state Rep. Tom Murt (D-Montgomery/Philadelphia) said Monday after announcing the reintroduction of this legislation, which he has been trying to pass since the 2013-14 session. "In 2008, the World Health Assembly passed a resolution about the elimination of this practice, emphasizing the need for concerted action from health care providers and law enforcement to stop this practice."

Female genital mutilation, referred to as FGM and consistent with what some cultures call female circumcision, in general, does not clearly fall within Pennsylvania's assault statutes, said a foundation that lobbies for legislation against FGM.

"General aggravated assault laws are not sufficient to protect against FGM," said George Zarubin, executive director of the AHA (Ayaan Hirsi Ali) Foundation in a statement in support of Murt's bill. "Parents wrongly believe they are doing the best for their child by inflicting FGM on them. There is no malicious intent required to prosecute assault. Legislating against FGM in Pennsylvania would give prosecutors the ability to prosecute at the state level."

So far, 26 states have illegalized FGM, including Delaware, Maryland and New York.

Ali, founder of the AHA Foundation, was born in Somalia and as a resident of the U.K. is an outspoken critic of FGM along with honor killings and arranged marriages, all of which her foundation lobbies against. Ali has in the past been accused of Islamophobia for primarily targeting cultural practices common within the Muslim faith.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, writer and critic of some Islamic cultural practices, expressed support for a new Pennsylvania bill to stiffen penalties against female circumcision. GETTY IMAGES

Female circumcision has been practiced on at least an estimated 130 million women worldwide. FGM has rarely been documented in the U.S., but is estimated to happen as often as in 73 percent of cases in countries like Gambia, with Ethiopia having a 98 percent female circumcision rate, according to UNICEF.

The AHA Foundation said some 500,000 women in the US, 166,000 of them under 18, are at risk of FGM. Pennsylvania is ranked 11th in the nation for FGM risk, with some 19,000 women estimated to be at risk of the procedure, 6,000 of them under the age of 18.

FGM by the numbers

500,000 Women at risk of FGM in the US

166,000 At-risk women under age 18 in the US

19,000 Women at risk of FGM in Pennsylvania

6,000 At-risk women under age 18 in Pennsylvania

Bill Cosby performs at first gig since sex scandals

Comedian Bill Cosby performed his first stand-up gig since being swept up in sex scandals, joking in Philadelphia on Monday about his blindness and fueling criticism on social media, according to video posted online.

The 80-year-old entertainer's appearance at the LaRose Jazz Club marked his first show since 2015 and came ahead of an April retrial for an alleged 2004 sexual assault in suburban Philadelphia.

Cosby, who starred in the 1980s TV series "The Cosby Show," has seen his family-friendly reputation destroyed by dozens of sexual assault allegations. He has denied assaulting anyone, saying any encounters with his accusers were consensual.

Online video footage showed Cosby wearing a sweatshirt and seated on a stool in the club. Describing people's reactions when he walks into things he cannot see, Cosby said: "There's a perfectly good word called 'stop,' not 'oh-oh-oh-oh-oh,'" drawing laughs from the crowd.

Bill Cosby performed for the first time since his legal issues began. GETTY IMAGES

Cosby's show was widely criticized on Twitter, with novelist Terry McMillan saying: "If you gave me front row seats to see Bill Cosby, I'd burn them."

Jeff Romaine tweeted: "NO ONE should ever go see him publicly without bringing a sack full of rotten fruit to throw. I would just feel bad for the fruit."

Cosby is scheduled go to trial on April 2 on charges that he drugged and assaulted Andrea Constand at his home in the Philadelphia suburb of Cheltenham. His first trial ended in a mistrial in June.

Pennsylvania prosecutors asked the judge in the case last week to allow the testimony of 19 other accusers, including 12 women who were not allowed to testify in the entertainer's first trial.

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Hawaii's governor delayed fixing missile alert because he forgot Twitter password

SAM BRODSKY
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We feel you.

On the morning of Saturday, Jan. 13, residents were in disarray when Hawaii's Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) mistakenly sent an alert to their phones at 8:07 a.m. warning of a missile threat.

The message, which also aired on TV and radio stations across the state, read, "Emergency alert: Ballistic missile threat inbound to Hawaii. Seek immediate shelter. This is not a drill."

At 8:10 a.m., Gov. David Ige (D) was informed that it was, in fact, a false alarm, but he didn't tell the public via Twitter until 8:24 a.m. when he retweeted the HI-EMA account's notification sent out four minutes prior.

Ige revealed that the false missile alert was sent during a shift change and that an employee pushed the wrong button.

Ige later tweeted a series of posts from a statement shared to Facebook that began, "Today is a day most of us will never forget. A terrifying day when our worst nightmares appeared to become a reality. A day where we frantically grabbed what we could, tried to figure out how and where to shelter and protect ourselves and our ohana, said our 'I love yous,' and prayed for peace.

"I know firsthand how today's false notification affected all of us here in Hawai'i, and I am sorry for the pain and confusion it caused," the note continued. "I, too, am extremely upset about this and am doing everything I can to immediately improve our emergency management systems, procedures and staffing."

He concluded the post, "We must also do what we can to demand peace and a de-escalation with North Korea, so that warnings and sirens can become a thing of the past."

The following day he shared a lengthy apology to Facebook — which he, again, posted in bits on Twitter, and he addressed citizens in a live broadcast Monday evening. Ige stated that they've established better protocols and lines of communication across their emergency management network, but acknowledged there is much to do moving forward to ensure this type of mistake never happens again.

A spokesperson for the governor told Huffington Post that his staff handles his social media accounts, and "it took time for the governor to contact us and give us the information before we could post it."

The information Ige was looking for? His Twitter password.

After his State of the State address yesterday, Ige told reporters that he couldn't immediately share the Jan. 13 alert update because he couldn't log in.

"I have to confess that I don't know my Twitter account log-ons and the passwords, so certainly that's one of the changes that I've made," Ige said, according to Huffington Post.

He continued, "I was in the process of making calls to the leadership team both in Hawaii Emergency Management as well as others. The focus really was on trying to get as many people informed about the fact that it was a false alert."

The governor further stated that he has since saved his Twitter information on his cellphone "so that we can access the social media directly." Although technology can be all-consuming, it's good for two things above all else: Staying connected and keeping tabs on important info — credit scores, shopping lists and Twitter passwords alike.

Gov. David Ige revealed that the false missile alert was sent during a shift change and that an employee pushed the wrong button. GETTY IMAGES

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Baseball Hall of Fame to announce 2018 inductees

2018 is Jim Thome's first year on the Hall of Fame ballot. GETTY IMAGES

JOE PANTORNO
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Cooperstown is slated to have a few new inhabitants take up residence this summer.

One may not find America's pastime, baseball, in a more pure state than how it is in Cooperstown, New York, home of the Baseball Hall of Fame.

The small village in upstate New York has been the home of the game since 1939, preserving the legacy of baseball's greatest legends and becoming the desired destination of any ballplayer who laced up his cleats in the major leagues.

On Wednesday evening, a few more names will be added to the list of 319 elected members, chosen by the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA) as the Hall of Fame announces its upcoming 2018 inductees.

In total, 21 players appeared on this year's ballot where members of the BWAA were tasked with choosing those they see fit for election. With over 400 ballots expected to be cast, candidates must receive at least a 75 percent acceptance rate to gain entry into the Hall of Fame.

In the latest numbers obtained by Metro New York, Vladimir Guerrero, Chipper Jones and Jim Thome are all but locks for enshrinement while another two, Trevor Hoffman and Edgar Martinez, could squeak their way into the hall this year as well. Once again, Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens — two players who have been linked with performance-enhancing drugs — will likely fall short for a sixth consecutive season.

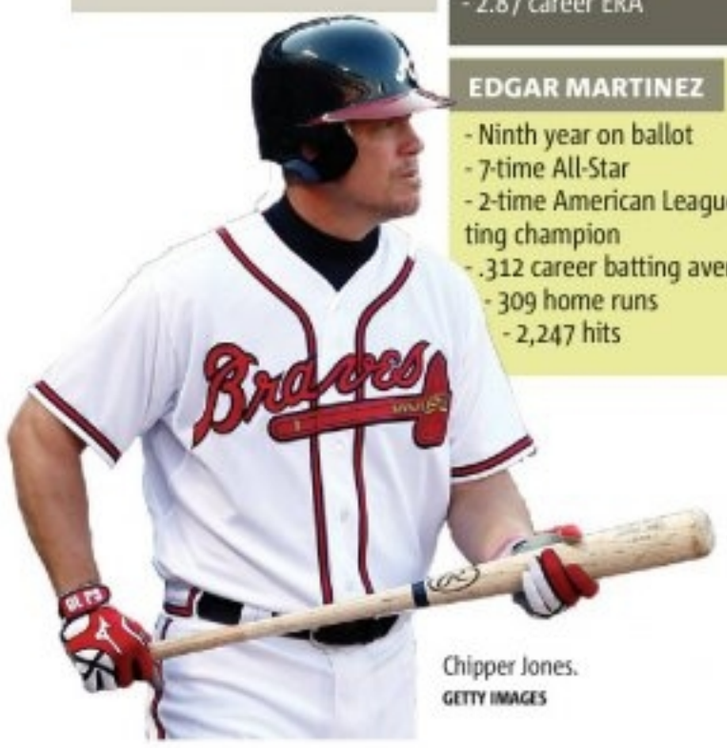
VLADIMIR GUERRERO
- Second year on ballot
- 9-time All-Star
- 2004 American League MVP
- .318 career batting average
- 449 home runs
- 1,496 RBI
- 2,590 hits

CHIPPER JONES
- First year on ballot
- 8-time All-Star
- 1999 National League MVP
- 2008 National League Batting Champion
- .303 career batting average
- 468 home runs
- 2,726 hits

JIM THOME
- First year on ballot
- 5-time All-Star
- 612 home runs (8th in MLB history)
- 2,328 hits

TREVOR HOFFMAN
- Third year on ballot
- 7-time All-Star
- 601 saves (2nd in MLB history)
- 2.87 career ERA

EDGAR MARTINEZ
- Ninth year on ballot
- 7-time All-Star
- 2-time American League batting champion
- .312 career batting average
- 309 home runs
- 2,247 hits


Chipper Jones. GETTY IMAGES

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the word

Franco's no Weinstein

Sarah Tither-Kaplan and Violet Paley — two women who have accused James Franco of sexual misconduct — appeared on Good Morning America on Tuesday morning, detailing Franco's inappropriate behavior.

Tither-Kaplan explained that Franco's main sin is creating an environment where women could easily be exploited. "James abused his power by exploiting the non-celebrity women that he worked with under the guise of giving them opportunities," she said. "[He] is absolutely not a Harvey Weinstein. He is not an unfeeling monster who has no sense of reality."

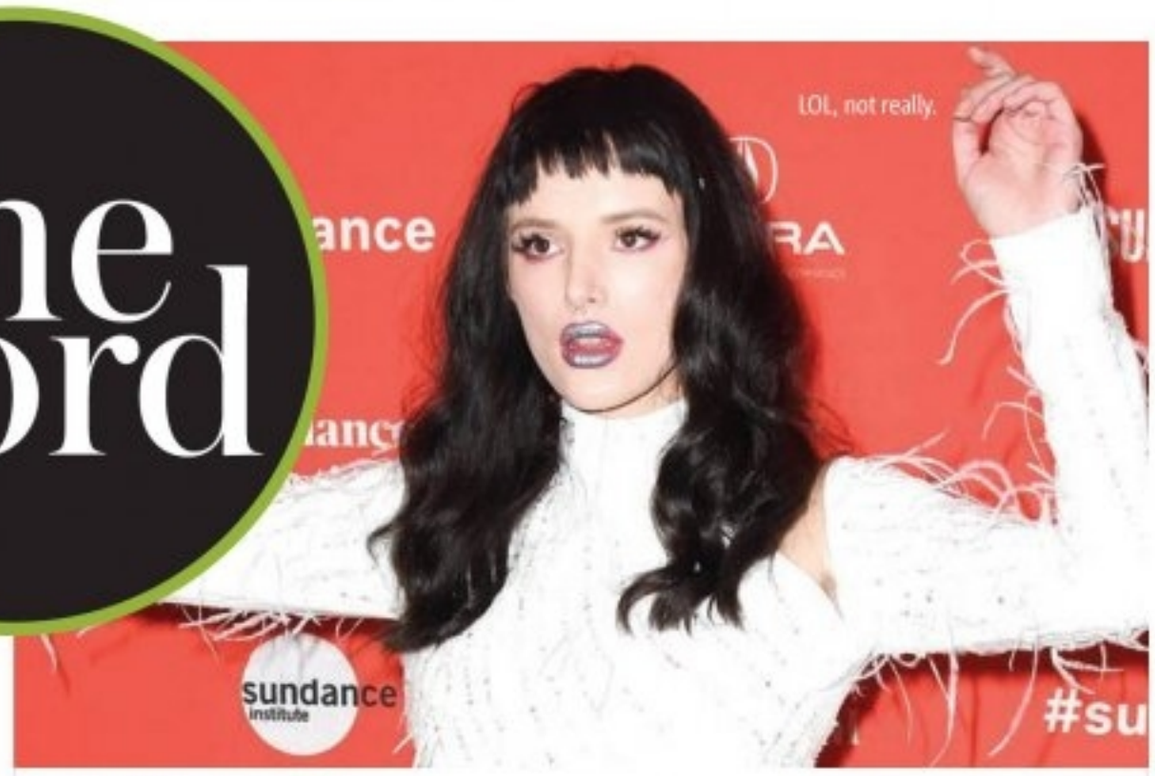
She also said that the best way for the 39-year-old to make retribution would be to use his celebrity for good — namely "using his power to give opportunities to women that are real and valuable and actually give them career advancement."

She added, "He's not an unforgivable person, at least for me."

Paley simply says she's ready for Franco to apologize already.

Here's hoping Franco is listening.

Listen up, Franco.
ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES



Bella is SO bad!

Bella Thorne was kicked out of a hotel for smoking marijuana. Sure!

Page Six reports that the 20-year-old and her entourage were removed from their hotel in Park City, Utah, on Sunday, after being caught smoking the good stuff. Thorne is at Sundance to promote "Assassination Nation," a film that is actually getting good reviews.

"They were seen rushing out of the hotel hours before the premiere," a source on the scene said. "There were so many bags they needed a trail car to carry them."

The next day, Thorne called in sick for most of her press interviews for whatever reason. Probably to prove she's a badass!

Because, as we all know, the best way to prove that you're really a "wild child" isn't to get your Lindsay Lohan circa her hot mess years (RIP) on, but to smoke weed and to not show up for your job. OK!

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Luann is doing great, BTW

After an arrest for battery and intoxication and a stint in rehab, Luann de Lesseps has returned to New York.

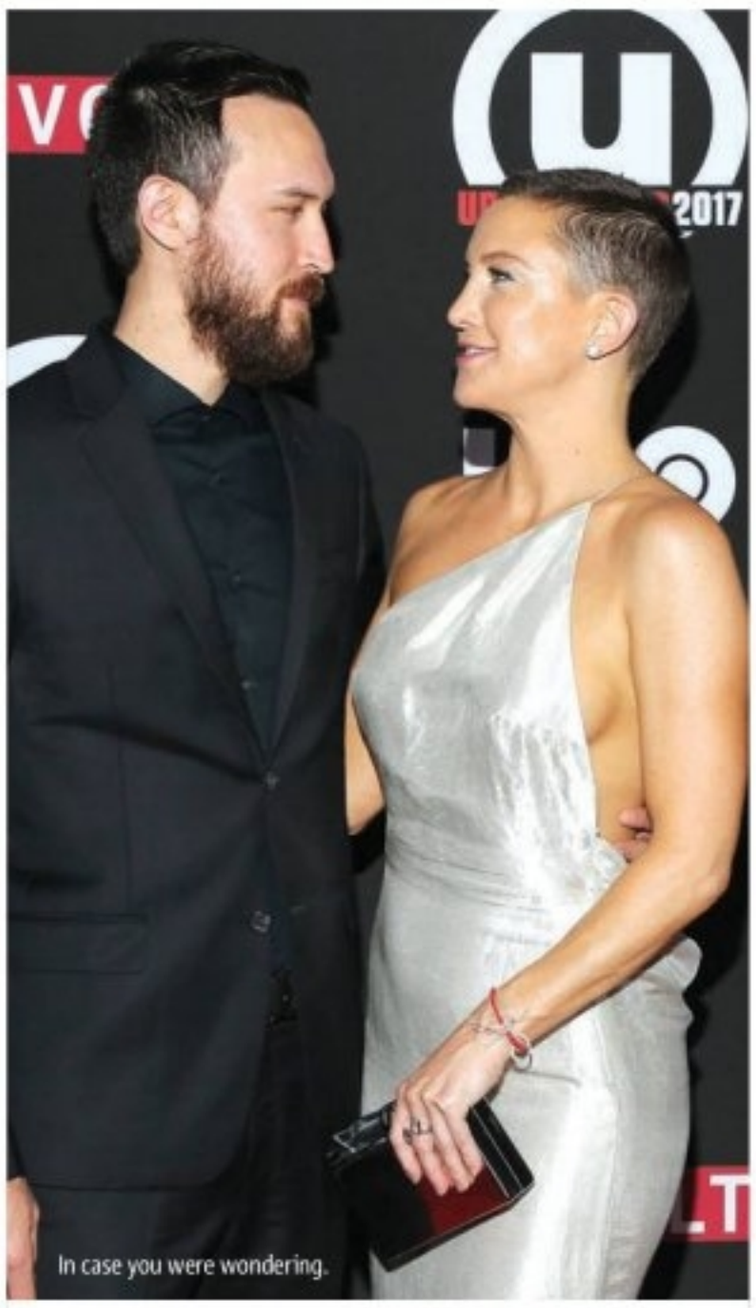
"It's good to be home," she wrote on Twitter. "I'm doing great. Spending time with friends and family. Thanking everyone for your continued good wishes and support."

If you, like me, know nothing about the Countess or the "Real Housewives of New York," here's the deal: de Lesseps was arrested on December 24 in Palm Beach, Florida. Her charges included battery on a law enforcement officer (dang), resisting arrest with violence (oh, man), disorderly intoxication (no big) and corruption by threat (damn, son).

Afterwards, she voluntarily checked into rehab, telling Us Weekly she was embarrassed of her behavior and had therefore decided to seek professional help.

Well, damn, girl. Good on you for making a change. I'd cheers to you, but that would be unhelpful, probably.

The Countess is back!


In case you were wondering.

Kate Hudson is not engaged

Kate Hudson was spotted with a wedding ring on her left ring finger, and you know what that means: nothing!

Although the 38-year-old actress was spotted sporting bling while out riding dirt bikes with boyfriend Danny Fujikawa, she took it off for the Screen Actors Guild Awards. And a source says that's because really, there's nothing to see here, telling People the couple is not engaged.

Hudson and Fujikawa have been dating a little over a year, and she celebrated the anniversary of their first date with a very long caption on Instagram in December. No, seriously, Hudson is giving you their whole life slash love story and it's basically a novella. And therefore too long to repeat in print. But trust me, it's a lot.

Anyway, as long as we're clear that these two aren't engaged — yet — I think we're done here.

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The 2018 Oscar nominations are actually impressive

"The Shape of Water" leads the way with 13 nominations. FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

A look at the most surprising nominations and snubs.

GREGORY WAKEMAN
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On Tuesday morning, the nominees for the 90th annual Academy Awards were released. "The Shape Of Water" leads the nominations, collecting 13 — four ahead of its closest rival, frontrunner "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri."

But while Guillermo del Toro and Martin McDonagh's films were widely expected to be in the running for the top gongs, there were plenty of surprises when the nominations were announced by "Girls Trip" breakout Tiffany Haddish and motion capture star Andy Serkis.

The most startling (but arguably most welcome) news was the omission of James Franco from the Best Actor list for his performance in "The Disaster Artist." Franco was expected to at least be in the running after he picked up the Golden Globe for Best Actor in a Comedy earlier this month.

But the five sexual assault allegations made against the actor scuttled his Oscar hopes. "The Disaster Artist" only picked up one nomination, for Best Adapted Screenplay.

Another film that was surprisingly overlooked? "The Post." Sure, it

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Jimmy Kimmel will play host at the Academy Awards on March 4. JEFF LIPSKY/ABC VIA GETTY IMAGES

walked away with two high-profile nominations — one for Best Picture category and an obligatory Best Actress nod for Meryl Streep — but director Steven Spielberg and lead actor Tom Hanks were not recognized for their work on the film.

The Academy does deserve some credit for the diversity in its nominations: Daniel Kaluuya ("Get Out") and Denzel Washington ("Roman J. Israel, Esq.") will go head-to-head in the Best Actor field; Mary J. Blige ("Mudbound") and Octavia Spencer ("The Shape of Water") are both nominated for Best Supporting Actress; and Guillermo del Toro ("The Shape of Water"), Greta Gerwig ("Lady Bird") and Jordan Peele ("Get Out") are all up for Best Director.

All of which means that the 90th Academy Awards have taken shape quite nicely.

Visit metro.us/entertainment to see who we think will come out on top in the ceremony and who we will actually be rooting for.

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Mississippi is nominated for seven Oscars, including Best Picture. FOX SEARCHLIGHT

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Community Spotlight:

Helping kids find their voice.

JENNIFER LOGUE
jennifer.logue@metro.us

Mighty Writers now has five locations in Philadelphia where kids learn to think and write with clarity. ALL PHOTOS PROVIDED

The Mighty Writers website features the Maya Angelou quote: "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

Being a great writer opens a lot of doors, no matter what field you're in, and being able to express yourself through the written word makes life a whole lot more fulfilling.

Mighty Writers is on a mission to help kids not only become better writers but better thinkers, too.

Founded in 2009 by journalist and editor Tim Whitaker, the organization now has five locations in Philadelphia: MW El Futuro (1025 S. 9th St.), MW North (2123 N. Gratz St.), MW South (1501 Christian St.), MW West (3861 Lancaster Ave.) and MW Rivera 3201 N. 5th St. Programs are free and 2,500 kids are mentored every year by over 400 passionate volunteers.

"I'd held a number of journalism jobs, the most recent 14 years as editor of Philadelphia Weekly," Whitaker says. "I needed a change and wanted to help address the youth literacy crisis. I knew that one solution was to get kids to think clearly and write with clarity."

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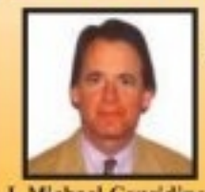
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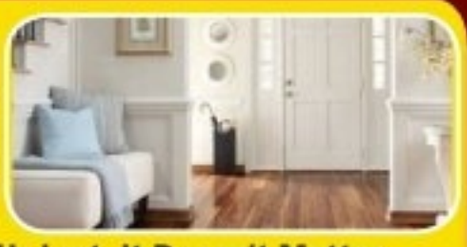
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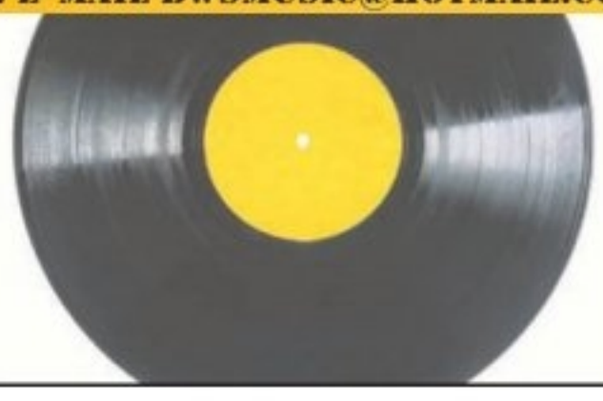

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Mighty Writers

Tim Whitaker is the founder of Mighty Writers.

express themselves with clarity keeps their eyes on the prize."

Whitaker describes the learning spaces at Mighty Writers as fun, accessible environments where kids are able to express themselves more freely.

"Our spaces are more clubhouse than classroom, filled with superhero art, from Spider-Man to Maya Angelou," he says. "We're the anti-school school."

Kids ages seven to 17 benefit from the many Mighty Writers programs available that include everything from workshops on poetry, cursive writing, writing in a professional setting and even a book club. Program offerings vary depending on the location and volunteers are always needed.

"Our volunteers tutor, mentor, run workshops and more. Some people volunteer daily, others weekly or monthly," Whitaker says. "There are any number of ways to volunteer; we can suit most anybody's schedule."

Seeing kids transform through becoming better writers makes it all worth it for Whitaker.

"The most inspiring part of Mighty Writers for me is watching kids go from being edgy and disinterested to embracing the concept of writing and expressing themselves," he says. "When that happens self-esteem soars and success follows. We see the same transformation over and over again."

If you'd like to get involved with Mighty Writers, visit: mightywriters.org.

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Eat more home-cooked meals, with less actual cooking on your part. ISTOCK

Perhaps you've heard: People are obsessed with their Instant Pots. Who can resist the droid-like devices, with their rounded tubs, cheerful blinking lights and pledge to do it all faster and better than we ever could? Like Roombas, they're the loyal robot pets to whom we relegate our most laborious and abhorred home tasks. Whether it's vaccuming up the heap of dog hair from under the couch or cooking a big ol' pot of beans in less than an hour, all we have to do is press a few buttons and BB-8 (or R2-D2, depending on your loyalties) will take it from here!

OK, enough with the A.I. smarm. If you aspire to do more home cooking without spending more hours slaving over the stove, investing in a multicooker can make that happen. It doesn't have to be an Instant Pot; plenty of brands have put out well-reviewed products that offer the same set-it-and-forget-it functionality. (Although Instant Pot definitely wins for best name.) Here's everything you need to know about your future plug-in home chef.

What the heck is a multicooker?

The multifunctional kitchen appliance does the work of about seven devices in one. It's a slow cooker, pressure cooker, rice cooker, steamer, yogurt maker, saute pan and warming pot. Basically, you throw in what you want to cook, select the proper setting and temperature, switch on the timer and leave it be. You're barely even cooking; you're more delegating, while the multicooker does the heavy-lifting for you.

What can you cook with it?

A better question would be, what can't you cook? (More on that later.) Use the slow cooker function for your chilis, stews and soups. The pressure cooker will tenderize meat until it's falling apart (pulled pork! Sunday pot roast!) and get your beans just right in under half and hour. The rice cooker will give those carbs the workout of their life in under 10 minutes. Cook your eggs or veggies under the steamer, or brown chicken with the saute function. If you've got a yearning to make yogurt, you can do that, too. Scared of your microwave? Heat up your leftovers with the "warm" setting.

Multicookers like the Instant Pot are ideal for set-it-and-forget-it meals. INSTAGRAM/@SINCERELY_SUTTON

What can't it cook?

This wunderkind does have its limitations. It does not function as a grill, so if you want that smoke flavor and charcoal sear, you'll have to bust out the George Foreman or the Weber. It won't blend things for you, so if you make soup and then want to puree it, you'll have to transfer it to your blender or food processor.

And let it be known these 6- to 8-quart tubs are not sleight of frame; if you don't have the space for the big boy in your kitchen, the Instant Pot might not be for you.

Finally, please read the manual

We all want to believe we can skip over the manual and just figure it out hands-on. But in this case, putting your literacy to use will save you a lot of confusion and even injury — you don't want to give yourself a steam burn because you didn't turn the pressure valve to the right setting.

Here's to easier home meals in 2018.

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Get organized!

We asked Ikea how to start down your own path to your most orderly home.

EVA KIS
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If finally getting your house in order (not metaphorically) is among your New Year's resolutions, then you need Ikea's Make Room for Organization workshop and sale.

On Jan. 27-28 from 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., every Ikea store in the U.S. will become organization headquarters. You'll score deals on storage items like hangers and dressers, then take part in activities and seminars to get you ready to clean up your life.

To get you started, we asked Ikea's Home Tour Squad, who travel the country to make over real homes, to answer the five most common organization questions they get.

Best way to organize?
The beginning of every organization project is taking an inventory you have so you get the right amount of storage.

But it's thinking a bit about the future that will really keep your life tidy. "A wardrobe tends to grow over time," says Stephanie Recupero, an Ikea interior designer. Don't just buy what you need now — "leave some room for growth."

How do I get started?
Know what you need by knowing what you'll want to do in the room. "Prioritize the activities you want to do in a space because that's going to dictate what you need for it," recommends Rocky Brewer, who's been with Ikea for 10 years.

Then, measure everything — not just the walls, but also windows, doors and the height of the room.

How can I get the most out of my small space?
"With a small space, use pieces that can serve more than one purpose," recommends Brewer. Can't fit a bed and a side table? Put a desk next to the bed that can serve as a nightstand.

And don't forget the most overlooked opportunity for saving space: "A lot of people don't take advantage to the height of their walls," Brewer notes.

How can I create a room that allows for multiple activities?
"When you have a space that has to do double duty, it's important to think in zones," says Brewer.

Try drawing out the room as if you were looking down from above and break it into bubbles of activity instead of making the same space serve functions for different people. Figure out what those activities need — an easel, a chaise, a desk — and work from there.

How can I stay on budget?
Just like you wouldn't change everything about your life all at once, you don't have to change everything about a room to make it work better for you.

For a home office, "I can get a nice desk, but let me really put my budget toward a chair that's really going to affect my work ethic and health."

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12 Reasons why

Tom Brady will play for his sixth Super Bowl ring in Minneapolis against the Eagles.

EVAN MACY & MATT BURKE
sports@metro.us

There really is no middle ground when it comes to Tom Brady. The five-time Super Bowl champion will be in his favorite place — in the spotlight once again — when the Patriots and Eagles clash in Super Bowl LII.

Ironically, many of the same reasons so many can't stand Brady are the reasons why so many others can't get enough of him. Metro Philly's Evan Macy laid out his reasons for hate, while Metro Boston's Matt Burke put a New England spin on things. Here are the 12 things to love and hate about Brady starting with the hate, as penned by Philadelphia sports editor Evan Macy (the corresponding reply is on the opposite page):

1 He plays for the Patriots

They are the modern evil empire. Every time I think about them Darth Vader's theme song plays in my head. Having good teams is good for a sport. Having great teams is better. Having a dynasty is rare and seeing one team win all the time gets old. It's like capitalism — we want people to get rich, but not diabolically rich. The Pats are diabolically rich.

We know what happens next week. Brady overcomes a slow start by his defense by marching the Patriots down the field with a little time left and wins by a slim margin. He makes a no-name player (maybe Chris Hogan this year) into a Boston hero and wins MVP. Blah Blah let's hear a new tune.

2 He is really, really smug

Did you see Brady after he hurt his hand last week talk to the media? How about a little respect? That's not exactly brevity. Just because you are really good at football you're allowed to give gigglingly-short answers to important questions?

3 He is way too good looking to be good at football

It's not enough that he has millions of dollars, a supermodel for a wife and striking good looks — he has to be the best quarterback of all time too?

4 He won't come clean (about Deflategate)

All I know is that the requested text messages during the NFL's investigation of Deflategate were deleted right after Brady was asked for them. For a man looking to clear his name, that's exactly the opposite action you'd expect. Were he legally subpoenaed and acted this way, he'd be in jail for obstruction of justice. Trying to get an edge is one thing. Cheating is another.

5 He likes Donald Trump

Brady and the president were friends — just like Patriots' owner Robert Kraft was. A "Make America Great Again" hat was seen in his locker room back during Trump's campaign and that makes me a little uncomfortable.

6 He just won't go away

Brady always find a way to come back. If the Eagles have a late lead and Brady has any time — he'll come back. And he's 40. He is freaking 40. The Eagles — fresh off of winning as an underdog against the best defense in the NFL by 31 points — are underdogs to a 40-year-old quarterback. Think about that for a second. Go out on top Tom. Seriously. You have nothing left to prove or play for.

everybody loves or hates Tom Brady

That's one way of looking at things. For Boston's sports editor Matt Burke, things aren't quite so skewed. In fact, most of the aforementioned criticisms could be construed as positives. Here's a look at six reasons to love Tom Brady:

1 He plays for the five-time SB champion Patriots

The Patriots are the greatest dynasty of our sports lifetimes in this country as the NFL is not built for sustained success. It's been 16 years since their first title. It's time for the rest of the country to embrace the Pats' greatest, much like the country eventually and collectively threw up their hands toward the end of Michael Jordan's career and said, "OK, fine. They're the best ever. Gotta enjoy this while it lasts."

2 He has reason to be smug

The Pats just can't win with you people. Belichick is hated because he's a prick to everyone in the media and only smiles once every third Blue Moon. Brady, meanwhile, is vilified for treating everyone - the media, his opponents - with the utmost respect … all with a smile on his face.

3 He is way too good looking to be good at football

This is true. When Jimmy Garoppolo was still here it looked like a damned Hollister photo shoot every day in Foxborough.

4 He doesn't have to come clean about Deflategate

Brady is married to the most famous supermodel in the world. Gotta think he has one or two inappropriate pics of Gisele on his phone. There were leaks all over the place with NFL execs at this time … why would Brady trust Roger Freakin' Goodell with his phone?

As for the actual alleged "cheating," I can sum up both Pats scandals in Cliff Notes' versions. Spy-Gate: The whole league was video taping sidelines, the NFL sent a memo to all teams to stop, the Pats were the only team that did not do so. Arrogance, fine. But cheating? Na. After they were "caught," they ripped off 18 wins in a row.

Deflategate: Seventh grade science debunked that one pretty easily.

5 He liked Donald Trump

It's obvious their friendship is over. Brady didn't show up to the White House last spring in the Pats' celebration there, and Trump hasn't mentioned him by name since (including the celebration when he perturbed by Brady snubbing him). Brady went golfing with the guy like three or four times in the mid-2000s, then Trump started acting like they were besties during the election when he wanted to win New Hampshire.

6 He doesn't need to go away

The NFL is at its best when there are all-time QBs always in the mix for a title. I have nostalgia for Dan Marino, Joe Montana and even Brett Favre (who I despised 10 years ago). NFL Fans will miss Brady when he's gone … eventually.

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11 DAYS
SUPER BOWL COUNTDOWN

Eagles superfan Trout predicts Birds beat Patriots, 31-24, on late interception

The star outfielder and lifelong Eagles fan speaks about his love for the city and team — and buddy Carson Wentz.

EVAN MACY
evan.macy@metro.us

When Mike Trout was 14 years old, a young youth baseball player in Millville, New Jersey, the future MLB MVP watched Tom Brady lift the Lombardi Trophy after beating the Eagles in Super Bowl XXXIX.

He thinks it will be different this time.

"I was at my parents house watching with my family," Trout remembered. "It was a tough one to watch, it was a close game — this team this year is just a little bit different. They just want to win. It's not just one guy carrying them."

The one guy — Carson Wentz — is a personal friend of Trout's as the pair have spent ample time hunting in the Garden State. And with his torn ACL, the Eagles have rallied together to earn a berth to Super Bowl LII in two weeks.

"It's difficult," Trout said, remembering his own struggle with injuries with the Angels. "I went through it last year, it's tough for him, he had an MVP season and I still think he's the MVP but it was hard to watch when he went down. He's working hard and he's not on crutches anymore."

Trout was sitting behind the end zone at field level Sunday when the Birds bashed the Vikings 38-7 to win the NFC Championship. He was the only believer in the Anaheim locker room.

"A lot of people doubted them," Trout — who said he picks the Eagles to win 31-24 on a last-minute interception — said. "A lot of players from the Angels doubted them, they give me grief all the time — but they're all rooting for them now because they're going up against Tom Brady. Throughout the whole year, a lot of ups and downs, but they're there."

Mike Trout grew up watching the Eagles in South Jersey, and has become one of the team's most famous fans. GETTY IMAGES

> *"I've never been a part, as a sports fan, of anything like what it was like at the Linc the other night."*
> Mike Trout

With other celebrity Eagles fans like Charles Barkley and Bradley Cooper expected to follow hoards of Philadelphians to Minneapolis for the Super Bowl, Trout is undecided about whether he'll join them.

"I think we are," Trout said. "I like watching it on TV, watching the commercials and spending it with my wife and family and friends. I don't know yet"

Another tough decision for Trout will come three seasons from now when his contract with the Angels runs out. Will Trout ever play in Philadelphia? The Phillies have a young core that could be ready to compete when he is set to be a free agent. Well, the door isn't closed but Trout isn't fueling the speculation either.

"I'm an Eagles fan. I grew up a Philly sports fan," he started. "I love playing in Anaheim, obviously I have a couple years left on my contract."

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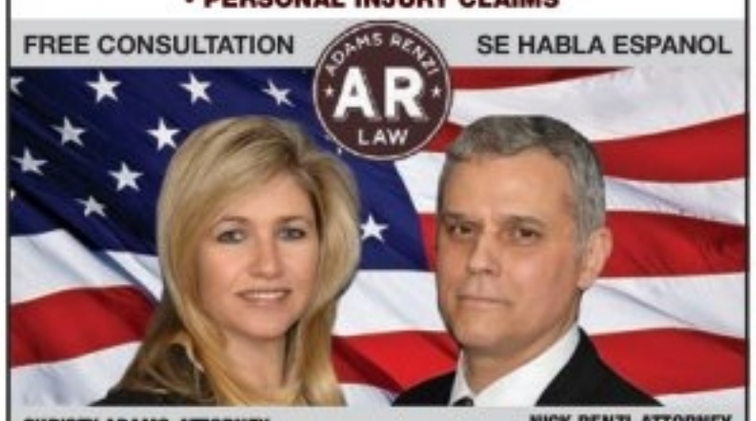

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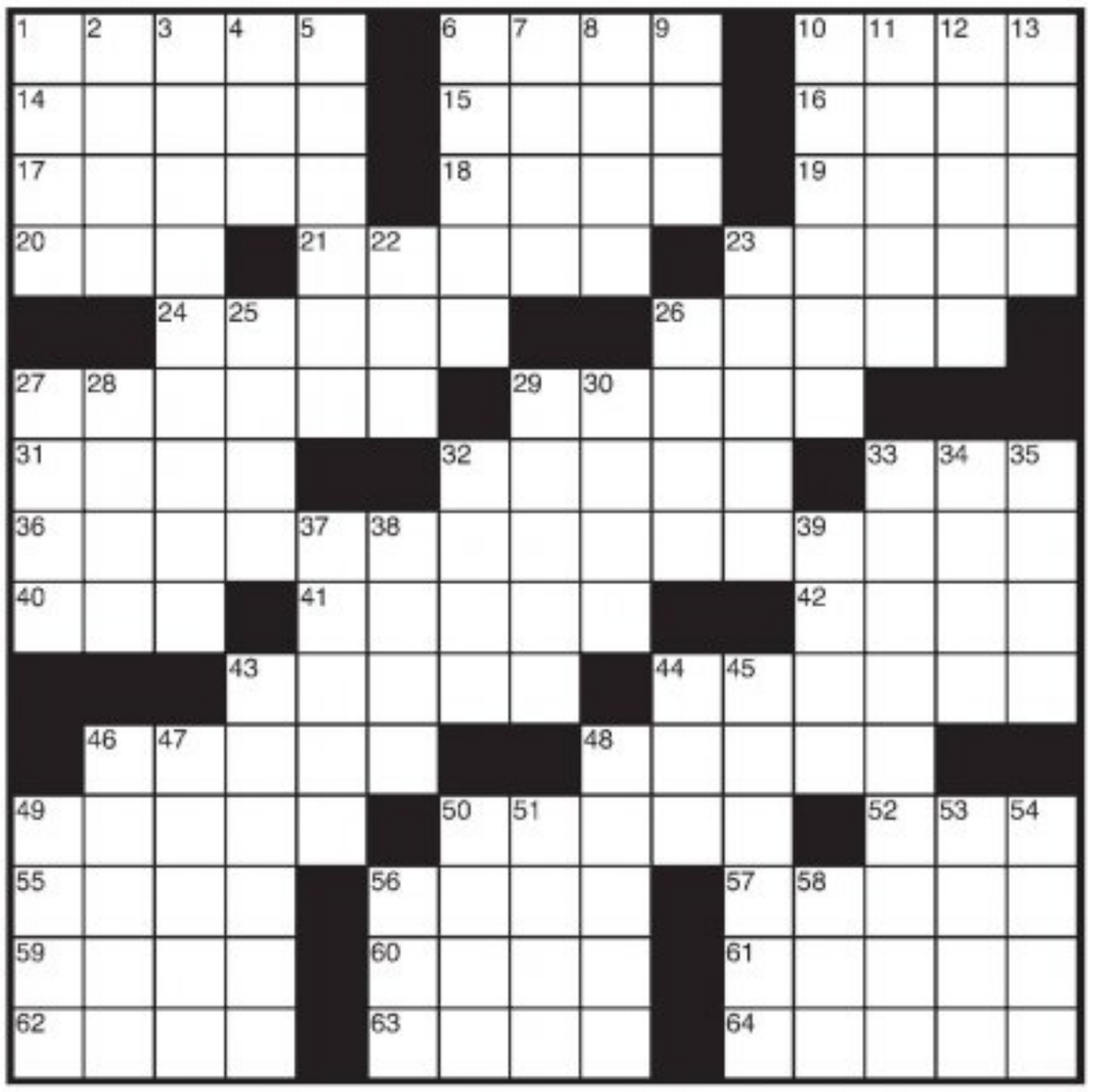
54 Game fish
56 Witty remark
58 Itinerary word



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hard

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metro.us/horoscopes

Aries Discipline will pay off. Set your goals and don't veer off course. What you accomplish will speak volumes about the kind of person you are. Be a doer, not a talker.

Taurus Don't let the little setbacks get you down. Added discipline and desire will take you in a direction that will result in greater satisfaction and an unexpected reward.

Gemini Put a hold on excessive behavior and start looking into investments that will help stabilize your life and financial future. Put your money into something concrete.

Cancer Focus on your accomplishments and working alongside people you feel can offer you much. Success will come if you let your creative imagination flow.

Leo Emotional distress is likely to develop if you can't agree with someone you work or play with. Be willing to compromise if you want to get something accomplished.

Virgo Attend a conference or set up a meeting with someone you feel has something to offer. Avoid making emotional decisions that could alter your personal agenda.

Libra Making home improvements or alterations to your living arrangements, or lowering your overhead are apparent. Refuse to let your emotions lead to a poor decision.

Scorpio The desire for change will overpower you if you let your imagination take control and your ideas grow disproportionately to your budget. Look for cheap solutions.

Sagittarius Don't feel you must follow the crowd. Protect against anyone trying to get you to invest in anything that doesn't benefit you directly.

Capricorn Getting along with friends, relatives and peers will not be easy if you let your emotions take the reins. Don't act in haste when a practical strategy is required.

Aquarius Willfulness will help you overcome any obstacles you encounter. Taking physical action to reach your goal will send a message to anyone trying to stand in your way.

Pisces A little Pisces charm and power of persuasion can go a long way. Aim to get ahead using all your attributes, experience and skills. EUGENIA LAST

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■	■	■	S	O	A	K	■	S	W	I	N	G	E	R
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If so, **Hassman Research Institute** is asking you to call today about participating in our research study.

Qualified study participants must:

- Be 18 to 75 years old with severe kidney impairment
- Be available for a 5-night stay in our clinic

There is no charge to participate and insurance is not needed. This study is for research purposes only and not intended to treat or cure any medical condition.

Transportation and compensation up to $1,725 for time and travel may be available.

Call today to see if you qualify.

For more information, call toll-free

1-866-230-4185

or visit HRITrials.com